

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SALT T 00453 181825Z

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S E C R E T SALT TWO GENEVA 0453

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PARM

SUBJECT: JOHNSON/SEMENOV PRIVIATE MEETING NOVEMBER 18 (SALT TWO-852)

REF: MEMCON A-1101 NOVEMBER 17

1. LAST NIGHT AT DINNER SOVDEL GAVE FOR ALL MEMBERS AND STAFF OF USDEL, MAKING CLEAR I WAS SPEAKING WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS, I INFORMALLY PROBED SEMENOV ON WHAT HIS VIEW WOULD BE OF THE TWO OF US SEEKING AUTHORIZATION FROM OUR GOVERNMENTS TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF DEVELOPING SUGGESTIONS THAT COULD BE MADE TO HIGHER AUTHORITY ON THOSE QUESTIONS WHICH WERE BEING "HANDLED ELSEWHERE." IN THIS CONNECTION I REFERRED TO PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY OF STATE WITH RESPECT TO EXCHANGES THAT HAD TAKEN PLACE BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW, AND ALSO REFERRED TO INITIATIVE THAT GENERALS BELETSKY AND TRUSOV HAD TAKEN TO DISCUSS THE BACKFIRE ISSUE WITH GENERAL ROWNY, SAYING THAT I HAD HOPED THAT THIS MEANT A GREATER WILLINGNESS ON THEIR PART TO DISCUSS THESE MATTERS HERE WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO EXCHANGES THAT WERE TAKING PLACE AT HIGHER LEVELS. I EXPRESSED MY DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE GENERALS WERE APPARENTLY UNWILLING TO CONTINUE THOSE DISCUSSIONS WITH GENERAL ROWNY. I SAID THAT MY IDEA, OF COURSE , WAS NOT THAT WE WOULD SEEK TO REPLACE HIGHER LEVEL CHANNELS BUT ONLY TO SUPPLEMENT THEM. ALTHOUGH SEMENOV'S REACTIONS WAS CLEARLY NEGATIVE (HE SAID, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THAT FOR US "DISCRETION WAS THE BETTER PART OF VALOR"), WE AGREED TO DEFER FURTHER DISCUSSION UNTIL TODAY.

SECRET

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PAGE 02 SALT T 00453 181825Z

2. AT MY PRIVATE MEETING WITH HIM THIS AFTERNOON, I REVIEWED

WHAT I SAID TO HIM LAST NIGHT AND, IN SUM, HIS ATTITUDE WAS NEGATIVE, SAYING THAT IF I HAD ANY SPECIFIC PROPOSALS OR PROPOSITIONS TO PUT FORWARD, HE WOULD BE GLAD TO RECEIVE THEM.

3. FYI: FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM WASHINGTON ROWNY PASSED WORD TO THE GENERALS THAT HE WOULD BE GLAD TO SEE THEM AGAIN IF THEY WOULD CONSIDER IT DESIRABLE FURTHER TO DISCUSS BACKFIRE. AS NO REPLY WAS RECEIVED, AT LAST NIGHT'S DINNER ROWNY AGAIN TOOK INITIATIVE IN SAYING TO GENERALS THAT HE WOULD BE PLEASED TO DISCUSS BACKFIRE ISSUE FURTHER IF THEY DESIRED. TRUSOV, WHO LED CONVERSATION ON SOVIET SIDE, WAS NON-COMMITTAL AND SAID THEY COULD DISCUSS ISSUE FURTHER AT BILATERAL FOLLOWING WEDNESDAY'S PLENARY. TRUSOV REPEATED TO ROWNY THAT BACKFIRE WAS MEDIUM BOMBER AND HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THIS "CONTRIVED" ISSUE WAS BECOMING SUCH A BIG ISSUE. IN CONVERSATION WITH CHERNAY AFTER DINNER, SALTYKOV VERY UNCHARACTERISTICALLY WAS HIGHLY EMOTIONAL ON SUBJECT OF BACKFIRE. JOHNSON

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